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Owner Mgr Intrprtr Svcs & Sprtl Care
 Area Patient Rights - Healthcare
 References CARF, TJC

Access to Interpreter Services

Policy/Procedure Number	PRHC-5001
Supersedes	PR-1004, Access to Interpreter Services PR-1004, Patient Rights and Services, Interpreting HR-1078, Human Resources, Bilingual Employees 1.3117, Policy: Patient & Family, Interpreting

Purpose Statement

Reflecting the philosophy of Valley Children's Healthcare, all employees will understand and participate in the practice of providing language assistance to all Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals in a non-discriminatory manner. This is to ensure meaningful communication with LEP patients/families and their representatives regarding their medical condition and treatment. It also provides for communication of information contained in vital documents. All interpreters, translators and other aids shall be provided without cost to the patient/family being served, and patients/families will be informed of the availability of such assistance free of charge.

Patients/Families will not be denied language intervention assistance due to age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression.

Patients/Families will be provided with any means of communication necessary at any time during their care when communication is considered imperative. Some LEP patients/families may prefer or request to use a family member or friend as an interpreter. Family members (especially children) or friends will not be used as interpreters unless requested after the LEP patient/family understands that interpreter services are available free of charge. Extra caution must be taken when the LEP patient/family chooses to use a minor as the interpreter. While the LEP patient's/family's decision should be respected, there

may be additional issues of competency, confidentiality, or conflict of interest when the choice involves using minor children as interpreters. In emergency situations, temporary use of family members or friends may be necessary. An interpreter provided by the hospital may still be present during the intervention as determined by the care provider to assist or monitor the exchange of information and document the preferred means of interpretation in the electronic medical record.

Policy

Valley Children's Healthcare, honors racial, ethnic, cultural and socio-economic diversity of families. Valley Children's accepts and complies with language assistance regulatory requirements. The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines to staff in the provision of language assistance to LEP patients/families and the use of interpreters and translators.

Interpreting is done via verbal or American Sign Language mode, and translating via written mode. An interpreter or translator is the individual providing the service. The Interpretive Services Department coordinates the interpretation and translation services rendered at Valley Children's. Depending on the service location, language intervention assistance may be provided either as a face to face, video or telephone intervention. For hospital and on-site hospital-based practices, professional medical interpreters are available 24 hours, 7 days a week, through the Interpretive Service Department.

Valley Children's Healthcare will annually review the policy for providing language assistance to patients/families with language or communication barriers. Modifications may be made following the assessment of changes in demographics, services offered, patient/family feedback, and requests from community organizations.

A bilingual employee may voluntarily communicate in the necessary second language, if they are able to pass a bilingual fluency test, and when it is appropriate for their role and competency level. Bilingual employees, volunteers, and providers remain accountable to the management of their department related to their work assignments, responsibilities and supervision.

Qualified/Applicable Personnel

Professional Medical/Healthcare Interpreters must meet the qualifications of the role. A competency check is completed and kept in the employee's department file by the supervisor.

Definitions

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Person

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, or understand English.

Languages of Lesser Diffusion

Languages that are rarely encountered are languages of lesser diffusion.

Interpreter

A person who is fluent in English and in the necessary second language and who mediates spoken or signed communication between people speaking different languages without adding, omitting, or distorting meaning or editorializing. An interpreter acts as an intermediary between people with language needs.

Medical or Healthcare Interpreter

A specially trained professional who is fluent in both English and another language, who is trained and proficient in healthcare interpreting; adheres to the professional code of ethics and protocols of healthcare interpreters; is knowledgeable about medical terminology; and can accurately and completely render communication from one language to another. Communication typically takes place between a patient/family and a healthcare provider (doctor, nurse, therapist, etc.).

Interpreting

The process of understanding and analyzing a spoken or signed communication; then re-expressing the message faithfully, accurately and objectively in another language; taking the cultural and social context into account. The purpose is to enable communication between two or more individuals who do not speak each other's language.

Bilingual

Bilingual is a term describing a person who is proficient in two languages and communicates fluently with people in either language. Fluency in both languages, the most basic of the qualification of an interpreter, by itself, does not ensure the ability to interpret.

Translation

The conversion of a written text into a written text in a second language corresponding to and equivalent in meaning to the text in the first language.

Procedure

Process

1. Hospital and on-site Hospital-based Practices: The Interpretive Services Department (35250) dispatches medical interpreters Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. to meet face to face interpreting needs for inpatient and ambulatory areas on the Madera Campus. A contracted service will provide face-to-face interpreting for languages of lesser diffusion. Medical interpreters are dispatched through the hospital operators during evenings, weekends and holidays. The Interpretive Services Department may contract with other agencies to meet the specific language requirements of patients and families when in-house resources are unavailable. This information and contact numbers are available through the Interpretive Services Department during business hours and can be accessed through the hospital

operator during evenings, weekends and holidays.

2. For Valley Children's Healthcare Primary Care Practices and Specialty Regional sites, personnel may reach an interpreter by dialing #990 for over the phone language assistance. In the event a high acuity visit requires a face-to-face interpreter, personnel may call the Interpretive Services Department (35250) in advance to request scheduled assistance. For American Sign Language (ASL), clinic personnel may call the Interpretive Services department in advance to request face to face assistance. For unscheduled language needs of both ASL or a rare language, a contracted service is available to provide either face to face or video remote interpreting unit services for languages of lesser diffusion. The Interpretive Services Department may contract with other agencies to meet the specific language requirements of patients and families when in-house resources are unavailable. The Interpretive Services Department (35250) is available Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:45 PM.
3. Medical interpreters provide over the phone language assistance to care providers by dialing #990.
4. A contracted vendor provides telephonic interpreting to all service areas by dialing #990 for rare language needs. American Sign Language and most rare languages are available by video or by submitting a Special Request form 48 hours in advance if the language request is made Monday through Thursday or 72 hours if request is made Friday through Sunday. This request is located on the George Page.

After hours, weekends and holidays, the hospital operator will be responsible to assign an in-house interpreter and/or additional available resources

5. Deaf and hard of hearing patients and families will be provided a video remote interpreting unit.

Bilingual Employees

An employee may use the necessary second language and medical terminology within their scope of practice, if they are able to accurately communicate in the required language as determined by the Bilingual Fluency Assessment. Competency will be assessed and determined by completion of the Bilingual Fluency Assessment. Competency results will be submitted to the department management by the Interpretive Services Department.

1. The bilingual employee's ability to communicate in a second language will be identified at the employee's Department Orientation and Competency Checklist during initial orientation.
 - A. If a new employee has been identified as bilingual during the orientation process, Human Resources will refer the employee to the Interpreter Services Department to complete the bilingual fluency assessment.
 - B. During the bilingual fluency assessment of the individual by a third party vendor, Interpretive Department Services and in collaboration with the employee's department, the scope of their allowed interventions and activities are defined and documented. Competency is added to the employee's file.
 - C. Department management has access to a department specific report of all competent bilingual employees.

Disclosures: In the event a family needs to be notified of an adverse event and an interpreter is required,

the Interpretive Services department will either provide the Interpreter or utilize a contracted vendor to meet the language needs.

Documentation

Care providers document the use of an interpreter, or document that medical interpreter services were offered at no charge to the patient/family and were declined. Medical interpreters document their language intervention service in the medical record.

References/ Regulations	<p>The Joint Commission, Standards: RI.01.01.01 & RI.01.01.03</p> <p>California Hospital Association Consent Manual</p> <p>California Code of Health and Safety, Section 1259& 1376.04</p> <p>Health and Human Services, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964</p> <p>The Office For Civil Rights/Americans with Disability Act (ADA).</p> <p>Office of Minority Health – Cultural and Linguistic Appropriate Services (CLAS) Standards</p> <p>The California Association of Public Hospitals, in conjunction with the Safety Net Institute, developed "Straight Talk: Model Hospital Policies and Procedures on Language Access," available at http://www.safetynetinstitute.org/publications/index.html.</p> <p>National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services</p>
Other Related Policies/ Procedures	<p>PS-5065 Adverse Event Reporting</p>

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Exec Healthcare	Accreditation Coordinator Nursing Admin Specialist [SB]	03/2026
Executive Nurse Council	Admin Asst - Patient & Fam Svcs [SB]	03/2026
CLAS-A Committee	Dir, Soc Wrk	03/2026
Approval(s)		03/2026

Content Expert(s)	[SB] Dir HR Operations [SB]	03/2026
Policy Owner	Mgr Intrprtr Svcs & Sprtl Care	03/2026

Standards

No standards are associated with this document

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